

Claim Amendments

1. (currently amended) A zoom lens formed of only three lens groups, in order from the object side, as follows:

- a first lens group having negative refractive power;
- a second lens group having positive refractive power; and
- a third lens group having positive refractive power;

wherein

the first lens group includes, in order from the object side, a negative lens component and a positive lens component;

the second lens group includes, in order from the object side, a biconvex lens component and a biconcave lens component that is intimately bonded to said biconvex lens component, a meniscus lens component with its convex lens surface on its object side, and the second lens group further includes a diaphragm for controlling the amount of light that passes through the zoom lens;

the third lens group is stationary during zooming and includes a lens component having positive refractive power, and the third lens group moves toward the object side from a reference position during focusing from infinity to a near point;

at least one lens component of each of the first and second lens groups includes a lens surface of aspheric shape;

the first and the second lens groups are moved so that the first and second lens ~~components~~ groups become closer together and so that the second and third lens ~~components~~ groups become farther apart during zooming from the wide-angle end to the telephoto end;

and the following condition is satisfied:

$$f_w / |f_{2-f}| < 0.2$$

where

$f_w$  is the focal length of the zoom lens at the wide-angle end, and

$f_{2-f}$  is the focal length of the image-side lens component of the second lens group.

1 2. (original) The zoom lens of claim 1, wherein said biconvex lens component includes a  
2 biconvex lens element, said biconcave lens component includes a biconcave lens element, and  
3 the following condition is satisfied:

$$v_3 - v_4 > 14$$

4  
5 where

6  $v_3$  is the Abbe number of said biconvex lens element, and

7  $v_4$  is the Abbe number of said biconcave lens element.

1 3. (original) The zoom lens of claim 1, wherein the second lens group consists of three lens  
2 elements.

1 4. (original) The zoom lens of claim 1, wherein the third lens group consists of a single lens  
2 element.

1 5. (original) The zoom lens of claim 3, wherein the third lens group consists of a single lens  
2 element.

1 6. (original) The zoom lens of claim 1, wherein the zoom lens consists of five lens components.

1 7. (original) The zoom lens of claim 1, wherein the zoom lens consists of six lens elements.

1 8. (original) The zoom lens of claim 1, wherein said reference position of said third lens group is  
2 the position of said third lens group when the zoom lens is retracted.

1 9. (original) The zoom lens of claim 2, wherein said reference position of said third lens group is  
2 the position of said third lens group when the zoom lens is retracted.

1 10. (original) The zoom lens of claim 1, wherein said meniscus lens component has negative  
2 refractive power.

1 11. (original) The zoom lens of claim 2, wherein said meniscus lens component has negative  
2 refractive power.

1 12. (original) The zoom lens of claim 8, wherein said meniscus lens component has negative  
2 refractive power.

1 13. (original) The zoom lens of claim 1, wherein said biconcave lens component and said  
2 meniscus lens component include planar peripheral portions parallel to one another and  
3 perpendicular to the optical axis of the zoom lens that are in contact with each other or are  
4 separated by a plane parallel plate.

1 14. (original) The zoom lens of claim 2, wherein said biconcave lens component and said  
2 meniscus lens component include planar peripheral portions parallel to one another and  
3 perpendicular to the optical axis of the zoom lens that are in contact with each other or are  
4 separated by a plane parallel plate.

1 15. (original) The zoom lens of claim 1, wherein said meniscus lens component includes a lens  
2 surface of aspheric shape.

1 16. (original) The zoom lens of claim 2, wherein said meniscus lens component includes a lens  
2 surface of aspheric shape.

1 17. (original) The zoom lens of claim 8, wherein said meniscus lens component includes a lens  
2 surface of aspheric shape.

1 18. (original) The zoom lens of claim 1, wherein said meniscus lens component is made of  
2 plastic.

1 19. (original) The zoom lens of claim 2, wherein said meniscus lens component is made of  
2 plastic.

1 20. (original) The zoom lens of claim 8, wherein said meniscus lens component is made of  
2 plastic.